

**Maryjane Kenney**

**From:** Peter Berry (office)  
**Sent:** Monday, June 04, 2007 8:56 AM  
**To:** Edmund Starzec; Lauren Rosenzweig; Andrew Magee  
**Cc:** Board of Selectmen; Don Johnson  
**Subject:** RE: Main Street Sidewalk Plans  
**Attachments:** Peter J. Berry (E-mail).vcf

Ed: Thanks for your comments. Although the Selectmen approved the tree cutting plan for the purposes of closing the public hearing, we also required that no trees be cut until the Board approves the final design for the sidewalk. Chief Widmeyer testified at the public hearing that his concerns for the safety of pedestrians in town were paramount for this stretch of Main Street. Paulina Knibbe is soliciting members for a subcommittee of the TAC to focus on sidewalk priorities in Town.

I anticipate that there will be further public input about this issue. The Selectmen welcome your comments about the design plans as they are finalized.

Regards

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-----Original Message-----

**From:** Edmund Starzec [mailto:estarzec@verizon.net]  
**Sent:** Sunday, June 03, 2007 6:10 PM  
**To:** Peter J. Berry; lsr57@comcast.net; amagee@epsilonassociates.com  
**Subject:** Main Street Sidewalk Plans

Lauren, Peter, and Andy:

I am generally hesitant to insert myself into processes with which I am not directly involved but I can't help but notice the growing public concern with the level of tree cutting associated with the proposed Main Street sidewalk as well as frustration with the accompanying public process. While I saw the notice for the tree hearing on your agenda a few weeks ago, it was not until I read Susan Mitchell-Hardt's letter in this week's Beacon and spoke with some fellow members of the Design Review Board on Tuesday that I realized the magnitude of this action. I think it deserves a more open and thorough public process.

I have two main questions.

**1. Why is this sidewalk suddenly a time-critical priority in light of recent clamoring for sidewalks in Acton's more densely settled neighborhoods?** This past year we all heard from residents of Prospect Street and other neighborhoods about the need for sidewalks in front of their

homes. I believe the sidewalk priority list was expanded and resorted at some point to take these concerns into account. I don't believe this part of Main Street is even on the list. Could the funding be redirected to start one or more of these other projects? Rumor has it that the funding for the Main Street sidewalk project is mitigation from Quail Ridge (I have long since recycled the Planning Board decision and my memory fails me here) but given the town's unflagging willingness to accommodate Mr. Peabody's frequent procedural oversights over the last few years (Audobon certification, pre-construction water quality testing, failure to properly store chemicals, etc.) I would hope that he is not somehow preventing this mitigation funding from being used elsewhere.

**2. Why don't we take the time to see if we can't improve the design?** If it is important to move forward with the Main Street sidewalk, it seems clear that the current design could be improved to reduce the cutting of mature trees, thereby improving the pedestrian experience and reducing concerns about loss of Acton's remaining rural character. Taking a quick look at the plans, they seem optimized to maximize ease of construction. I think a sidewalk here could be a real benefit for the town but it needs to be carefully designed a la the great winding, undulating sidewalks we see in parts of Lincoln and Concord (and even along our own Pope Road!). Acton resident Tom Dolittle, a trained landscape architect and WalkBoston board member, has volunteered his services to help improve the plan. If this redesign would require additional funding, I would hope that there might be a creative way to fund it perhaps through the CPC.

From my own work, I know how frustrating delay for the sake of process can be and I don't mean to take away from the good work of staff. That said, if there is any way to reopen discussion on this topic in coming weeks, I think the public will benefit no matter what decision is reached.

Thanks,

Ed Starzec

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